

Lt. Glen James Wurden, USAAF



VON WURDEN FAMILY HISTORY

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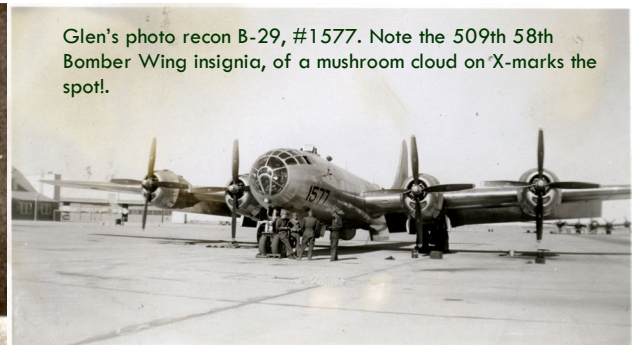
Nov. 2006 By Glen A. Wurden

Operation Crossroads "Able" Atomic Bomb Test

Glen James Wurden, was in the Army Air Force at the end of WWII, assigned as a mechanic in the 509th Bomber Group, otherwise known as the men and planes who dropped atomic bombs. On July 1, 1946, he rode in the photo recon B-29, number 44-61577 (an F-13A version), at the right scanner position, to take pictures of the air drop test from a distance of 12 miles. The target was a fleet of ships parked in Bikini lagoon. He wore dark goggles against the flash, and wrote to his mother that he had a good view of it, and that the mushroom cloud rose to 65,000 feet in 10 minutes. He thought it was both beautiful and terrible, and it didn't shake the plane too much. He wrote that he would be glad when a 100-hour inspection on his plane was over! Glen cursed the "ever-leaking engines of the B-29!". Glen went on to B-29 flight engineering school after coming back from the Pacific in 1946.



Glen's name is visible above his left shoulder (4th on the list).



Glen's photo recon B-29, #1577. Note the 509th 58th Bomber Wing insignia, of a mushroom cloud on 'X'-marks the spot!.



Flight Engineer & Pilot School

Glen enlisted in the US Army Air Force in 1945, and was a B-29 mechanic. In June 1946 he was at the Kwajalein air base, 235 miles from Bikini Atoll. Back in the States, he later got his pilot's certification, learning in a T-6 trainer. From 1940 to 1945 North American Aviation built the T-6 "Texan" advanced fighter trainer for the U.S. Army Air Force, the U.S. Navy and many Allied Nations. In

the final phase of training advanced techniques and tactics were taught in the Texan. This was the last airplane that the fighter pilot trainees flew that had a second seat for an instructor (see photo of Glen in his T-6 on page 4). Glen earned his wings, and rank of Lieutenant by 1948.





Charles Bittinger #20
Oil on canvas, 1946

A number of artists painted events at Operation Cross-roads

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Artist Charles Bittinger painted for the US Navy

On the right, #4 was painted from the perspective of Bikini Island, this study shows the cloud towering over the ships of the target fleet. Although Bittinger was at the test, he was not on the island as no one was allowed within five miles of the atoll during the blast..

<http://www.history.navy.mil/ac/bikini/bikini1.htm>



- THE ABLE BOMB HAD A YIELD OF 21 KILOTONS
- DROPPED FROM 30,000 FEET, IT MISSED ITS MARK BY MORE THAN 1000 YARDS
- MANY CAMERAS MISSED THEIR PHOTOS AS A RESULT.
- SEVENTY-THREE SHIPS WERE MOORED AS TARGETS. THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER SARATOGA SURVIVED, BUT WAS BADLY CONTAMINATED.

“THE YOKOHAMA YO-YO TOOK THE FIRST POST-BOMB PICTURES OF HIROSHIMA, ON AUGUST 7, 1945”.



Yokohama Yo-Yo

Glen also sent home pictures of the Yokohama Yo-Yo, another semi-famous B-29. He worked on it as a crew chief. It was also a photo recon B-29 variant, type F-13A, number 42-24621, and had a nice piece of nose art. The “F” on the nose denoted photo recon, whereas “Dave’s Dream” had a “B” for bomber.



Glen's Letter Home



July 3, 1946



BATTERY OF CAMERAMEN line up at their battle stations in one of the 77 planes which were in the air over Bikini at the time of the atomic explosion. Almost every camera in the line of photographic equipment was used to record the effects of the test, from giant telephoto lenses to flash cameras which can make up to 6,000 pictures a second.

Dear Folks,
... some time since I've written you all but I think you will understand where I say we have been quit busy the last couple of weeks. I suppose you've read all about the first big boom, by now. They tell me that the day of the blast people in the states (some of them that is) did some mighty foolish things. We laugh at it and wonder what they would have done if they had been about 235 miles from it or 12 miles from it like we were. We sure fought to go on that mission and luckily I won out. I rode eight scanners position on our plane and had a good view of the blast. We wore very, very, dark glasses the first couple of seconds of the flash. The cloud went to about sixty five thousand feet in ten minutes. It was very beautiful but in a way very terrible. It didn't look

the plane shot and I guess from where you have read all about it.

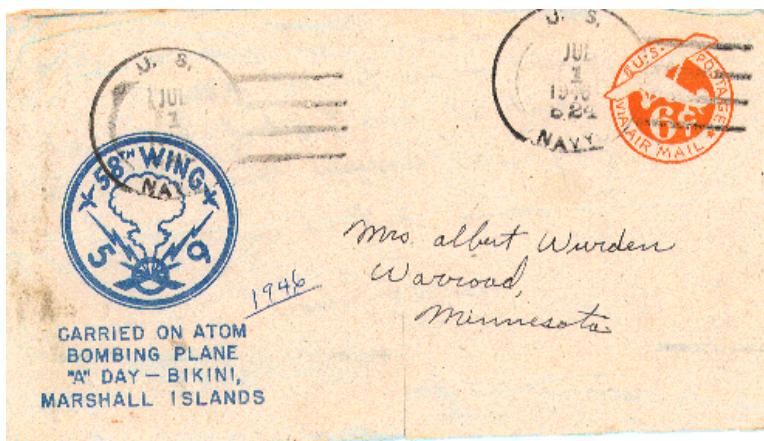
We are putting a hundred hour inspection on our plane now and I'll sure be glad when it's done.

We are to watch in life magazines for a picture of our ship "577" with all the cameras in the project before it. I x! be the cover picture. Love it if it is.

This envelope was carried by the bomber "Dave's Dream" on "H" Day. Love it too. I shook hands with Major Swannett. If you don't know who he is forget it.

I'll try to write once a week from now on but most nights a few of us are going to B29 flight engineers school. "and just keep it to yourself" We may get something out of it and maybe not.

P.S. I heard from Ted and I think he did the right thing.
Love,
Glen



This letter cover, sent to Agnes Wurden by Glen Wurden, was carried on the B-29 "Dave's Dream", # 44-27354, which dropped the bomb at Bikini Atoll, July 1, 1946.

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My Uncle Glen while living a life that he loved. Born Dec. 29, 1926, died Feb. 28, 1949

Glen was killed in Feb. 28, 1949, while returning from C-119 "Flying Boxcar" training at Hamilton AFB in California, on his way back to Randolph AFB in Texas. The plane was a C-47A (#43-16256), piloted by George N. Pennington. The twin-engine transport crashed into a mountain in Coahuila, Mexico in bad weather., killing 15-17 members of his squadron, who had been training to fly for the Berlin Airlift.

My namesake Glen James Wurden died while living his dream of being a pilot. I only knew him through his little brother, my Dad, and pictures like the ones here. The photo above on the right was taken in 1948. Glen was the second of four children, (in the striped swimsuit, with his brothers and sister). His grave is in Warroad, Minnesota

